

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

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## RESIDENTIAL INTEGRATION OF YOUTH WITH IMMIGRANT BACKGROUNDS IN MONTRÉAL

**Introduction**

This research results from the collaborative efforts of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Immigration and Metropolis Centre for Inter-university Research (IM), which is part of the Metropolis Project.

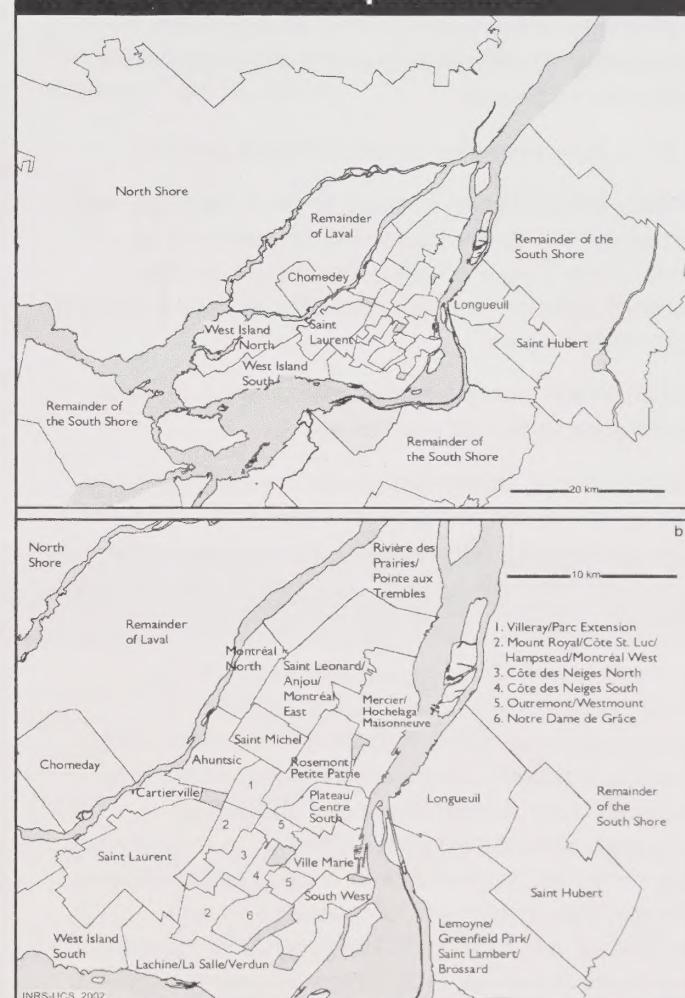
The Metropolis Project is an international forum for comparative research and public policy development about population migration, cultural diversity and the challenges of immigrant integration in cities in Canada and around the world.

In the Montréal metropolitan region in 1996, more than one in six residents (17.8%) had been born outside Canada. The immigrant population is increasing in both absolute and relative terms. Since 1986, the number of immigrant households has increased more than the number of non-immigrant households. Accordingly, young immigrants will become an increasingly significant portion of the residential market in the Montréal area.

Efforts to look into the residential profiles of international immigrants living in the Montréal area have some limitations. There has been no systematic analysis by age groups, and, previous research on the residential status of low-income households did not examine membership in a visible minority group. In addition, as previous studies have targeted household maintainers, the situation of young adults living in their parents' homes has not been examined.

This research study addresses some of these weaknesses. The goal of this study is to describe the 1996 residential situation of young Montrealers, aged between 15 and 29, with immigrant parents. The research draws its essential data from a special compilation of the 1996 census for the Montréal metropolitan area (following specific divisions of 28 zones) obtained through the second component of Statistics Canada's Immigration and Metropolis initiative.

**Figure 1 – The 28 analysis zones in the Montréal metropolitan area**



## Issues and Method

The report address the following occupancy type (owned or rented), the unit type, unit location within the metro area, and the affordability ratio (in other words, the percentage of revenue spent on housing). The financial indicators for the relevant households; the median income and the frequency of incomes of under \$20,000, are also presented

In addition to identifying young adults according to the immigration status of the household's main income earner, the data often permitted more detailed analyses taking into account whether a household is part of a visible minority group, in addition to household type. The data were obtained by dividing the 15-29 age category into groupings of five years (15-19, 20-24, 25-29) corresponding to different periods in a young person's passage into adulthood.

The study generated data on two different groups:

- Young people under 30 years of age living in parental homes in which the household maintainer is an immigrant. They are analyzed as individuals, but according to certain characteristics of the households in which they live.
- Households whose principal maintainer is a young immigrant under 30 years of age.

In the report, the expression "youth from immigrant backgrounds" means young people living in a household with an immigrant as the principal maintainer, whether or not the youth themselves are immigrants, as well as young households whose maintainer is an immigrant.

The specific research issues were formulated as a function of these two distinct groups, and the organization of the report reflects this distinction. When addressing access to housing, it is important to know whether, all other things being equal, the young immigrants' affordability ratio is higher than that of non-immigrant youth. Accessibility to housing by low-income visible minority immigrants, as compared to non-immigrants is also important. The geographic location of young visible minorities living in low-income households is a significant issue for social and community stakeholders.

Significant geographic concentrations of these young people in low income households, especially in the 15-19 age group, may be an important indicator of the need for facilities and services intended to improve this group's quality of life as well as their social and professional integration.

The living conditions (housing adequacy) of young people with immigrant backgrounds who live in parental homes, was also assessed—data permitting.

## Results

In the Montréal area, it is more common for youth from immigrant backgrounds to live with their parents than it is for those who are not of immigrant background. This result is the same as those obtained by previous research conducted on a national level.

There is a very significant gap in the propensity for young people in the 20-24 and 25-29 year age groups from immigrant and non-immigrant households to live in the parental home (see Table I below). Among those who are between 20-24 years, just less than half (49%) of the young people from non-immigrant homes live with their parents, but this proportion increases to 75% among those from immigrant homes. Among the 25-29 year age group, young people are much less likely to live with their parents, but the gap between the two groups is even more marked (15% compared to 39%).

**Table I: Proportion and number of young adults living in parental homes by immigration and visible-minority group status of the main household maintainer**

HOUSEHOLD MAINTAINER		AGE OF YOUNG ADULT		
IMMIGRANT STATUS	VISIBLE STATUS MINORITY	15-19	20-24	25-29
Total	Total	92.1% 192,789	55.1% 120,375	20.0% 48,950
Non-immigrant	Total	92.4% 134,665	48.6% 74,820	14.5% 26,690
	Yes	63.2% 800	14.8% 345	8.4% 195
	No	91.6% 133,865	49.2% 74,475	14.6% 26,395
Immigrant	Total	92.4% 56,905	75.1% 45,055	38.9% 22,090
	Yes	91.5% 27,250	64.7% 18,705	27.7% 8,270
	No	97.3% 29,655	84.8% 26,350	51.2% 13,820

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 census, special tabulations prepared for Immigration and Metropolis.

According to the study, most young people living in two parent homes benefit from good living conditions: household income, the proportion of owner-occupied units, and the proportion located in low-density suburbs (these would most often be quite spacious homes). Many young visible minorities are part of this group of young people.

On the other hand, low incomes are prevalent among immigrant single-parent families, with a young adult at home, especially in the case of visible minorities. A household whose main income earner belongs to a visible minority group but who was born in Canada experience lower incomes than for those not born in Canada. Numbers for this group were small so this last result must be interpreted with caution.

With respect to young people living on their own, young immigrant households make up a significant element in Montréal's residential market dynamic. Between 1986 and 1996, the number of households with a Canadian-born main income earner between 15 and 34 decreased by 10% (see Table 2 below). Among young immigrant households the growth of this population group was 23%. This growth is still far from meeting, in absolute terms, the losses observed in the numbers of young households whose maintainer was born in Canada.

## Area of residence

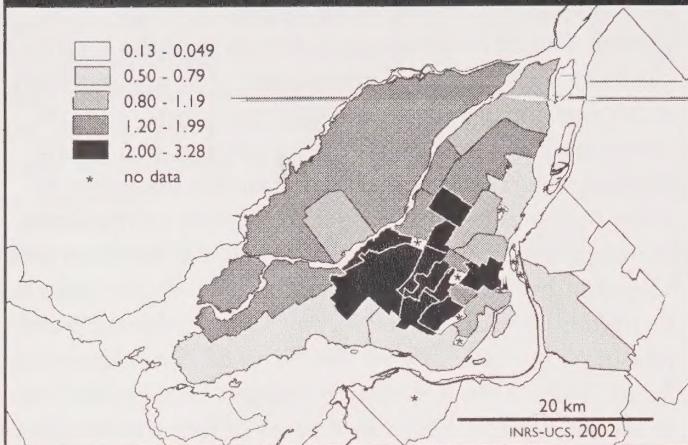
With respect to area of residence, young immigrant households are more attracted, than are young Canadian-born households, to the many neighbourhoods of the former City of Montréal or to former suburbs located on the Island of Montréal. Consequently, they are less likely to be present, proportionately, in many sectors on the periphery. The research also demonstrates that young immigrants do not necessarily follow the behaviour of older immigrants with respect to location of residence, although these behavioural differences are less than with Canadian-born households. Here again, they are attracted to neighbourhoods in the former City of Montréal and less to former suburbs on the Island of Montréal and the South Shore, than are older immigrant households. This probably explains their lower rates of homeownership. The compared location quotients of the two groups are shown in Figure 2, below.

**Table 2: household growth rates, 1986–1996, according to age and immigrant status of household maintainer, Montréal CMA and sub-regions**

SUB-REGION	15-34 YEARS			TOTAL		
	Total	Immigrants	Non-immigrants	Total	Immigrants	Non-immigrants
Montréal CMA	-5.9%	23.1%	-9.8%	19.8%	27.8%	16.3%
Former City of Montréal	-12.3%	30.2%	-20.3%	5.2%	24.0%	-3.7%
Remainder of the island of Montréal	-19.5%	12.8%	-25.3%	8.8%	23.8%	2.3%
Laval	-7.4%	28.9%	-10.4%	27.0%	57.9%	21.7%
Longueuil	-19.8%		-21.2%	12.3%	29.9%	10.3%
North Shore	54.5%	44.2%	54.8%	94.6%	62.9%	96.1%
South Shore (excluding Longueuil)	3.8%	-0.4%	4.0%	35.4%	36.0%	35.1%

Sources: Statistics Canada, 1986 and 1996 censuses, special tabulations prepared for Immigration and Metropolis; Mongeau et Séguin (1993), unpublished tabulations from 1986 census.

**Figure 2: Location quotients for young immigrant households compared to all young households – Montréal metro area**



### Affordability ratio

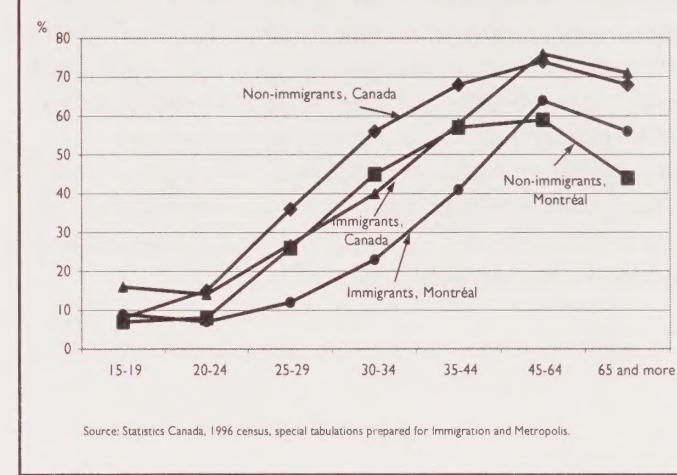
With regards to affordability ratio, the proportion of gross income spent on housing costs, young households with immigrant main income earners are at a disadvantage. The proportion of young households, both owners and tenants in Canada, who spend less than 30% of their income on housing is clearly higher among those who are Canadian-born (See table 3). In contrast, housing cost to income ratio of 50% or more are more prevalent among young immigrant households. This is a cause of concern as these households have few resources remaining to cover other basic household costs. Single-parent families headed by a woman and households of only one individual are particularly vulnerable and have high affordability ratios (31% to 50%).

### Access to property ownership

With respect to access to property ownership, there is an observable decrease in ownership rates among young immigrant households between 1986 and 1996, whereas Canadian-born households in the same group made gains. In addition, fewer young households with immigrant main income earners live in single-family homes, which is generally the most valued type of residence in North America. In as much as they elect to live in the former City of Montréal, it is not surprising that young immigrants less often live in this type of housing.

In 1996, in the Montréal area (see Figure 3 below), the proportion of households that own their homes is greater among immigrants in the 45 years and over age groups. For the other age groups, (including 20–34), the proportion of owners is greater among Canadian-born households. Interestingly, the same trend can be observed for Canada as a whole, although the proportion of owners is lower for Montréal.

**Figure 3: Proportion of homeowner households according to maintainer's age and immigration status, Canada and Montréal CMA, 1996**



### Visible minorities

The residential status of low-income households, considering their membership in visible-minority groups, was also examined. These households have low incomes (under \$20,000), and tend to live within the borders of the former City of Montréal. Low income is an obstacle to property ownership for all groups – young immigrant and Canadian-born households, whether or not they are members of visible-minority groups. All households with low incomes have very low ownership rates (approximately 6%).

**Table 3:Affordability ratio for young households by immigration status and occupancy type, Montréal CMA, 1996**

IMMIGRANT STATUS	AFFORDABILITY RATIO	OWNERS		RENTERS	
		Number	%	Number	%
TOTAL	Total	29,470	100.0	136,770	100.0
	Less than 25%	17,680	60.0	60,610	44.3
	25-29.9%	3,790	12.9	10,660	7.8
	30-49.9%	4,710	16.0	25,625	18.7
	50% and more	3,270	11.1	39,875	29.2
IMMIGRANTS	Total	2,415	100.0	20,020	100.0
	Less than 25%	1,020	42.2	6,645	33.2
	25-29.9%	280	11.6	1,615	8.1
	30-49.9%	535	22.2	4,210	21.0
	50% and more	565	23.4	7,540	37.7
NON-IMMIGRANTS	Total	29,990	100.0	111,425	100.0
	Less than 25%	16,640	61.7	53,155	47.7
	25-29.9%	3,510	13.0	8,685	7.8
	30-49.9%	4,150	15.4	20,390	18.3
	50% and more	2,675	9.9	29,185	26.2

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 census, special tabulations prepared for Immigration and Metropolis.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, the residential situation of young immigrant households is less favourable than that of their Canadian-born counterparts on several levels: access to adequate housing, access to single-family homes and affordability ratio.

This research also revealed that the group with the highest proportion of low incomes (56%) is that of young Canadian-born households whose main income earner is a member of a visible minority (however the numbers are relatively small). In this last case, the low income levels of a significant proportion of these households can be attributed to post-migratory integration problems. Thus, the situation of these households would bear further exploration.

Finally, households that have incomes above \$20,000, with an immigrant main income earner, who is a member of a visible minority, have decreased access to home ownership.

In summary, the residential status of young immigrant households is not as favorable as that of young Canadian-born households (except, in the latter group, those who belong to a visible minority). This could be the result of an economic, social and residential integration process that takes time, i.e. approximately ten years of living in Montréal should lead to a situation that is comparable to that of Canadian-born households. Several studies, including one in Quebec, suggest that the economic integration of new immigrants could, now and in the near future, become more difficult than in the past, because of cyclical trends and structural changes in the job market. Therefore, residential perspectives could become quite bleak for a significant proportion of immigrants, particularly for certain more vulnerable categories.

Although the numbers for young adults living in low-income parental homes are not very high, there is reason to be concerned about the relative concentration of this phenomenon among households that belong to a visible minority. In light of the results, it seems important to better understand the experiences and residential strategies of this segment of low-income families through

additional research, such as qualitative studies. To what degree is late departure from the parental home a way of dealing with poverty and relying on family solidarity? To what degree does this cohabitation generate increased intergenerational tensions? It is also important to be able to measure the material contributions (financial and otherwise) young adults make to the household.

An area that remains unexplored by housing researchers, which merits specific attention is the status of youth who are immigrants or who are members of visible minorities living in low-cost housing. These youth are at risk of being isolated from the social networks that could help them continue their studies or obtain employment.

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**Research Report:** *Residential Integration of Youth from Immigrant Backgrounds in Montréal*

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